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SUBJECT An Interview with Tim Butz

JIM HARTZ: After CIA station chief in Athens Richard Welch was assassinated, U. S. intelligence officials point out that he had been identified as an agent in a magazine called Counter-Spy, a Washington based publication which specializes in exposing American intelligence activities, and suggested that this identification may have led to his murder.

Well, to answer these charges, Counter-Spy's editor Tim Butz is in our Washington News Center this morning with "Today" Washington correspondent Douglas Kiker.

Doug.

DOUGLAS KIKER: Thank you, Jim. Good morning, everybody.

Mr. Butz, here is your winter edition of Counter-Spy. And inside it you list country after country, and you list the names or what you think are the names of the station chiefs, CIA agents there. Doug Porter, who is the co-editor of Counter-Spy, your associate, says that it is conceivable that the Athens News, which published the name of Richard Welch as a CIA agent, could have gotten that name from Counter-Spy. Do you agree?

TIM BUTZ: I think that Mr. Porter was quoted out of context. That was in an Associated Press dispatch that appeared in many newspapers yesterday. With Counter-Spy and its limited circulation -- we circulate about three thousand copies throughout the United States -- we have the element of distribution or redistribution after it goes to a subscriber. We can guarantee in any way, shape or form that a copy of Counter-Spy wasn't seen by the Athens Daily News, because we don't know what some-

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one might have done afterwards....

KIKER: What -- what are you trying to accomplish?

BUTZ: It's the way the New York Times perhaps would land up on Chairman Mao Tse-tung's desk some morning.

KIKER: What are you trying to accomplish publishing the name of agents?

BUTZ: Well, we're not doing it simply for expose. The article where we listed the hundred and fifty station chiefs, for example, was an analysis of the role of station chief, an analysis of what they do. And we listed the names primarily to give people an idea of how widespread the CIA is. From Katmandu to Karachi, there are CIA stations in some of the most innocuous places in the world, men operating at the request of the United States government. And what we're trying to do is raise the question of what are they doing there and, even more important, how are they functioning.

KIKER: Well, a lot of people -- David Phillips, former CIA agent, says you're endangering agents' lives. Mike Ackerman, who was on the Today show, a former CIA agent on the Today show last week, said you're endangering American agents' lives.

Do you think you are or not?

BUTZ: No, we're not endangering lives. Our policy at Counter-Spy is to only reprint names that have already appeared in the foreign press. We don't engage in a campaign of ferreting out people under deep cover and printing their name in an irresponsible manner. We take the tack -- and we think it's a very responsible one -- of going over the foreign press, picking out those names that have been identified, rechecking them against several different sources, and then publishing them only if it comes up in the context of a critical nature.

KIKER: Well, obviously other intelligence networks, the Soviet network and so forth: they know our agents; they know those names. You've got a book there that purportedly was published by the KGB that lists many of the names -- fellow professionals. But by publishing the names, don't you make U. S. agents targets for terrorists who probably wouldn't have access to such information?

BUTZ: People such as Mr. Welch are....

KIKER: Who was shot down by three masked gunmen.

BUTZ: Right. Right. They are symbols of an American

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agency that many people feel has conducted a worldwide campaign of terror itself. We don't try to put together something that could be called a hit list, as Mr. Colby and others have tried to refer to us. This information is available worldwide. If Counter-Spy was to stop publishing the names tomorrow, the names would still be published in newspapers throughout the world. There's a worldwide move on against the CIA that has led to a lot of expose activity. Counter-Spy is not a journal of expose; it's a journal of analysis.

KIKER: You have announced that you're going to publish the names of seventy more agents who are operating, CIA agents, in Angola, France and Sweden next month. Do you intend to do it?

BUTZ: So far some of those lists have arrived in the mail from the foreign press. Liberation Newspaper in France, which is a daily, is planning on publishing the names there. And if they appear in France, there's a very good likelihood that we will reprint them in Counter-Spy.

Our policy on printing names is constantly under review, and there're several things we have to take into consideration when we proceed with the publication of names. The primary point in our mind is "Will it benefit the American people? Will it lead to a greater understanding of what the CIA is doing around the world?" If that first criteria is filled, if it indeed will help to foster better understanding and, even more important than that, better public debate on the role of the CIA, then we'll proceed. But we are in contact with our advisers; we're in contact with our supporters, people who in the past has indicated a willingness, trying to get their feedback.

The printing of names is almost a tactical exercise and not something we're married to.

KIKER: Where do you get the names? Are you sure that your sources are correct when they give you these names? And how do you know you're not fingering non-agents?

BUTZ: Well, we take several precautions. For example, the newspaper Information in Denmark recently ran an eight page supplement to its newspaper outlining CIA operations in Denmark. Now it's kind of hard to imagine that CIA operations in Denmark would fill eight pages of newsprint, but, in fact, it did. We take those names. We cross-check them against the State Department Registry, which is a publicly available document. And Mr. Ackerman on Friday detailed a little bit of how you could identify CIA agents from that document. And we also use another source, one that was never talked about before. But being honest with you,

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what we use is embassy telephone directories. From an embassy telephone directory, you can ascertain who is in a CIA station simply by the rooms that the people are located in and the telephone exchanges.

KIKER: The British have an intelligence system also. What do you think would happen if somebody like you published an equivalent of Counter-Spy in Great Britain? They'd be put in jail. They would be restrained, wouldn't they?

BUTZ: Well, there is an Official Secrets Act in Great Britain that would probably restrain the ability of people there to conduct those operations. And one of our fears is that a similar restriction on the First Amendment will be put into effect here....

KIKER: You're publishing.....

BUTZ: ...in this country.

KIKER: That's right. You're publishing these because the First Amendment gives you the right to publish them. I want to ask you, do you think you are abusing your First Amendment rights?

BUTZ: No. The Bill of Rights, especially the First Amendment, was put together because the framers of the Constitution, the leaders of the country two hundred years ago felt that the public had a right to know, that the public had the right to free association, and that people had a right to say what they wanted.

The purpose behind Counter-Spy, the purpose behind the Fifth Estate, has always explicitly been to foster a public debate on the question of national security. Until three years ago, such things weren't discussed in public. They were talked about only behind closed doors in Washington. We felt that the lessons of Vietnam had a very specific mandate: to take that question of national security out of the secret doors of the White House and Langley, Virginia and put it out in the public where people could have their input, where people could debate this critical question that everyday becomes more interesting and exciting.

KIKER: Okay. A member of -- a member of your advisory board, Arthur (?) Richard Sales, says, and this is a quote: "Our job is to expose every clandestine agent until the CIA abandons its covert actions." Is that your mission, to, in effect, destroy the agents, or try to?

BUTZ: Well, I don't think that "destroy" is the proper

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name. Our target is obviously covert operations and the intervention into the affairs of foreign countries. We also feel that the CIA is not capable of existing unless it carries out this sort of function.

In truth, Mr. Kiker, the CIA serves very little purpose when it comes to intelligence. The vast majority of critical intelligence needed for policy-making and decision-making in this country comes from the National Security Agency and the State Department. Their intelligence collection programs, their analytical programs are far superior to anything that the CIA has. We feel that that leaves the CIA in a certain light, and that light is to act as the cop around the world, to enforce, in a covert fashion, the whims of the National Security Council, whims that may not necessarily be the desires of the American people.

IKER: Finally, very quickly, who finances Counter-Spy?

BUTZ: Counter-Spy is financed by the subscribers, by sustainers, people such as Norman Mailer and others.

IKER: Thank you very much. And as far as I can see, Mr. Butz, what you intend to do really is to keep it up -- is what you say.

BUTZ: We're going to continue to foster the public debate. We're in touch with our advisers, and what course we'll take from here is up to everyone.

IKER: Thank you very much, Tim Butz, who is the co-editor of Counter-Spy. Time now for a station break.

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